

# Reserve de la Lope

## Description of the site:

Reserve de la Lope is a biological reserve established in 1982 approximately 40 km west of the town Booue. It is adjacent to the Parc National de l'Okanda and mainly south of the Ogooue river. The reserve and the national park are almost at the equator within the an area bounded between latitudes 0 to 1 degree south and longitudes 11 to 12 degree east. The reserve consists of savanna and open lands in the north and dense evergreen forest in the south within the national park and is home of large herds of buffalos, forest elephants, various types of antelope and lowland gorillas.

## Climate:

Mean annual precipitation (mm):

Mean Annual Temperature (C)

Mean annual potential evaporation (mm)

Montly Climate: 1996

Month	Mean Monthly	Mean Min. Temp.	Mean Max. Temp.
January			
february			
March			
April			
May			
June			
July			
August			
September			
October			
November			
December			

## Landscape:

Current research material.

New York Times Article:

Gabon Logging Sets Off A War Among Chimps

Logging of tropical forests in the central African country of Gabon appears to have touched off a savage territorial war among chimpanzees in which four of every five chimps die, says a field biologist for the Wildlife Conservation Society.

With an estimated 50,000 chimpanzees, Gabon has until lately accounted for a third to a half of a total African chimp population estimated at 100,000 to 150,000. But the chimpanzee wars have apparently reduced the Gabonese population to about 30,000, and it could ultimately fall to 10,000 if most of the country logged as now planned, said the biologist, Dr. Lee White. The fear is that the central African subspecies of which Gabon Chimps are members might become endangered, as are two other species in western and eastern Africa. The findings from Gabon are especially startling because the logging is selective, intended to minimize damage to the habitat of chimpanzees and other animals. No more than 10 percent of the trees in a given tract are cut, Dr. White said at a briefing last week in New York sponsored by the society, which has its headquarters at the Bronx Zoo. Nor is there any hunting in the area studied by Dr. White. And no other large animals like elephants or gorillas appear to have suffered.

But chimps, the animals most closely related to humans, are known to be highly jealous of territory, patrolling and defending borders constantly. Even without logging, violent clashes are known to erupt in which chimps kill each other with their bare hands and feet. In at least two documented cases, large communities of chimpanzees have systematically hunted down smaller ones and killed all members.

What is happening in Gabon, Dr. White believes, is that as mechanized logging operations advance on a continuous front three to six miles wide, their approach frightens the chimpanzees, which are not used to humans and have never encountered anything like big, noisy machines. So they flee - right into territory of the next chimp community.

When that happens, Dr. White said, "you're essentially going to kick start a chimpanzee war." The males from the invaded community attack the interlopers, and many die. Then the loggers keep coming. The invaded community itself is displaced onto the next community's territory. New warfare breaks out, Dr. White believes, "and this process goes on and on and on as the loggers move through."

Dr. White said he and his African colleagues "have a scientific reluctance to shout about this effect," since they have not actually observed chimpanzee war in progress. But, all signs point in that direction, he said.

First, he said, it is clear on the basis of sampling surveys of chimpanzee nests, scats and actual animals in Gabon's 2,000-square-mile Lope reserve that the population of a given community falls by 80 percent immediately after the loggers go through. The surviving 20 percent, Dr. White postulates, filter back to their home range through undisturbed forest after the war.

Second, Dr. White observed chimp behavior suggesting a war atmosphere. In one area where he was surveying the effect of logging, the chimpanzees were extremely agitated, drumming on trees, calling to each other and even rushing Dr. White himself. "On a number of occasions they mobbed me," he said, "I had whole chimpanzee communities charging to about five meters and screaming at me, and that's very unusual behavior." He interprets this as evidence of "a very stressed chimpanzee community, which is exactly what we would expect if this sort of chimpanzee war was going on."

Why are gorillas not affected in the same way? One reason may be that home ranges of gorilla groups commonly overlap each other and aggression between groups is rare. Dr. White and a colleague, Dr. Caroline Tutin, make this point in a chapter prepared for a forthcoming book, "African rainforest Ecology and Conservation."

## Field Data in Lope:

We arrived in Lope on Tuesday night Oct. 27, 1997. From Libreville to Lope, it took us approximately 6 hours and we stopped in Ndjole for a short while for food. After the bridge in

The list of the sites and brief descriptions within the Lope Reserve:

1. The first gallery forest along the road to the western side of the park is a mixture of swamp and gallery forest.

GPS Reading: 00, 11.03 S and 011, 28.94 E

2. GPS readings for the logging roads from the Lope Reserve to the Njole.